

110TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 3486

To establish the Commission on Measures of Household Economic Security to conduct a study and submit a report containing recommendations to establish and report economic statistics that reflect the economic status and well-being of American households.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 12, 2008

Mr. FEINGOLD introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

A BILL

To establish the Commission on Measures of Household Economic Security to conduct a study and submit a report containing recommendations to establish and report economic statistics that reflect the economic status and well-being of American households.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Commission on Meas-
5 ures of Household Economic Security Act of 2008”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds that—

1 (1) Federal and State governments, policy-
2 makers, legislators, and private sector entities de-
3 pend on the economic statistics that are published
4 by the Federal Government;

5 (2) Federal economic statistics are used, among
6 other things—

7 (A) to judge our Nation’s economic per-
8 formance over time; and

9 (B) to provide policymakers and legislators
10 with the information necessary to design appro-
11 priate economic policies and other programs to
12 address the well-being of American individuals
13 and households;

14 (3) questions have been raised about the suffi-
15 ciency of existing reported economic measures and
16 statistics to provide a meaningful and accurate re-
17 flection and assessment of the economic well-being of
18 American individuals and households;

19 (4) the most commonly reported economic sta-
20 tistics, such as gross domestic product, unemploy-
21 ment rate, and consumer price indices, do not ade-
22 quately or accurately reflect the economic status of
23 average American individuals and households; and

24 (5) a more accurate, transparent, coherent, and
25 comprehensive assessment of the economic well-being

1 of American households and regular reporting of
 2 such information would allow Federal and State gov-
 3 ernments—

4 (A) to better track and judge the economic
 5 status of average Americans; and

6 (B) to develop better, more accurate, and
 7 more responsive policies to address concerns
 8 that are more directly relevant to American
 9 households.

10 **SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMISSION ON MEASURES**
 11 **OF HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIC SECURITY.**

12 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established the Com-
 13 mission on Measures of Household Economic Security (re-
 14 ferred to in this Act as the “Commission”).

15 (b) MEMBERSHIP.—

16 (1) COMPOSITION.—The Commission shall be
 17 composed of 8 members of whom—

18 (A) 2 shall be appointed by the majority
 19 leader of the Senate, in consultation with the
 20 chairmen and ranking members of the Com-
 21 mittee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pen-
 22 sions of the Senate, the Committee on Com-
 23 merce, Science, and Transportation of the Sen-
 24 ate, the Committee on Banking, Housing, and
 25 Urban Affairs of the Senate, and the Joint

1 Economic Committee, of whom 1 shall be an
 2 employee of the Bureau of Economic Analysis;

3 (B) 2 shall be appointed by the minority
 4 leader of the Senate, in consultation with the
 5 chairmen and ranking members of the commit-
 6 tees referred to in subparagraph (A), of whom
 7 1 shall be an employee of the Census Bureau;

8 (C) 2 shall be appointed by the Speaker of
 9 the House of Representatives, in consultation
 10 with the chairmen and ranking members of the
 11 Committee on Financial Services of the House
 12 of Representatives; the Committee on Ways and
 13 Means of the House of Representatives; and the
 14 Joint Economic Committee, of whom 1 shall be
 15 an employee of the Bureau of Labor Statistics;
 16 and

17 (D) 2 shall be appointed by the minority
 18 leader of the House of Representatives, in con-
 19 sultation with the chairmen and ranking mem-
 20 bers of the committees referred to in subpara-
 21 graph (C), of whom 1 shall be an employee of
 22 the Federal Reserve.

23 (2) QUALIFICATIONS.—Members of the Com-
 24 mission shall be—

25 (A) appointed on a nonpartisan basis; and

1 (B) academic or government policy experts
2 in the field of economics, statistics, or other
3 specialty field that is directly related to the du-
4 ties of the Commission described in section
5 4(a).

6 (3) DATE.—The members of the Commission
7 shall be appointed not later than 60 days after the
8 date of the enactment of this Act.

9 (c) PERIOD OF APPOINTMENT; VACANCIES.—Mem-
10 bers shall be appointed for the life of the Commission. Any
11 vacancy in the Commission shall not affect its powers, but
12 shall be filled in the same manner as the original appoint-
13 ment.

14 (d) CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN.—The Commis-
15 sion shall select a Chairman and Vice Chairman from
16 among its members.

17 (e) MEETINGS.—

18 (1) INITIAL MEETING.—Not later than 60 days
19 after the date on which all members of the Commis-
20 sion have been appointed, the Commission shall hold
21 its first meeting.

22 (2) REGULAR MEETINGS.—During the life of
23 the Commission, the Commission shall meet—

24 (A) at the call of the Chairman; and

1 (B) not less frequently than once every 3
2 months.

3 (f) QUORUM.—A majority of the members of the
4 Commission shall constitute a quorum for purposes of
5 transacting the business of the Commission, but a lesser
6 number of members may hold hearings.

7 (g) RULES.—The Commission may establish by ma-
8 jority vote any other rules for the conduct of the Commis-
9 sion's business, in accordance with the provisions of this
10 Act and other applicable law.

11 **SEC. 4. DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION.**

12 (a) STUDY.—The Commission shall identify, study,
13 and evaluate—

14 (1) existing economic statistics and data col-
15 lected and reported by agencies of the Federal Gov-
16 ernment that describe the economic well-being of
17 American households;

18 (2) ways to synthesize, expand, augment, im-
19 prove, and modernize the statistical measures de-
20 scribed in paragraph (1) to provide a more accurate,
21 transparent, coherent, and comprehensive assess-
22 ment of the economic well-being of American house-
23 holds by—

1 (A) determining the cost, logistics, imple-
2 mentation time, and reliability of producing new
3 statistics;

4 (B) recommending improved standards and
5 methodologies for measuring and reflecting the
6 economic well-being of American individuals
7 and households; and

8 (C) considering the development of statis-
9 tical measures to describe—

10 (i) the current debt situation of Amer-
11 ican individuals and households, including
12 a description of the categories of debt,
13 such as credit card debt, education related
14 loans, and mortgage payments;

15 (ii) the movement of Americans be-
16 tween salaried jobs with benefits to single
17 or multiple wage jobs with limited or no
18 benefits, including a comparison of income
19 that includes the value of benefits pro-
20 grams, such as health insurance and re-
21 tirement plans;

22 (iii) the percentage of Americans who
23 are covered by both employer-provided and
24 individual health care plans and the extent

1 of health care coverage per dollar paid by
 2 both employers and employees;

3 (iv) the savings rate, including both
 4 standard savings plans and pension plans;

5 (v) the disparity in income distribu-
 6 tion over time and between different demo-
 7 graphic and geographic groups;

8 (vi) the number of Americans receiv-
 9 ing cash or near cash transfer payments
 10 from the Federal Government and a State
 11 government and the percentage of house-
 12 hold income represented by such benefits;
 13 and

14 (vii) the breakdown of household ex-
 15 penditures between categories such as
 16 food, shelter, medical expenses, debt serv-
 17 icing, and energy;

18 (D) the relevance, development, and imple-
 19 mentation of nonmarket satellite accounts, in-
 20 cluding accounts related to—

21 (i) household production;

22 (ii) investments in formal education
 23 and the resulting stock of skill capital;

24 (iii) investments in health and the re-
 25 sulting stock of health capital;

1 (iv) activities of the non-profit and
2 volunteer sectors; and

3 (v) environmental assets and services.

4 (b) CONSULTATION.—In conducting the study under
5 this section, the Commission shall consult with relevant
6 government leaders, representative citizen groups, and ex-
7 perts, including—

8 (1) the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board
9 of Governors;

10 (2) the Secretary of Commerce;

11 (3) the Secretary of Labor;

12 (4) the Secretary of the Treasury;

13 (5) the Chairman of the Council of Economic
14 Advisers;

15 (6) the Comptroller General of the United
16 States;

17 (7) the Administrator of the Environmental
18 Protection Agency;

19 (8) the Secretary of Health and Human Serv-
20 ices;

21 (9) the Director of the Bureau of Economic
22 Analysis;

23 (10) the Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor
24 Statistics;

1 (11) the Committee on National Statistics, Na-
2 tional Research Council at the National Academies;
3 and

4 (12) representative groups of citizens, from
5 sample populations selected through methodologies
6 and procedures recommended by appropriate ex-
7 perts, that represent national geographic, economic,
8 and employment diversity.

9 (c) REPORT.—Not later than 18 months after the
10 date of the first meeting of the Commission, the Commis-
11 sion shall submit a report to Congress that contains—

12 (1) a detailed statement of the findings and
13 conclusions of the Commission; and

14 (2) recommendations for such legislation and
15 administrative actions as the Commission considers
16 appropriate, including—

17 (A) a list of economic statistics that should
18 be reported regularly to more accurately reflect
19 the economic status and well-being of American
20 households, and the uses and benefits of such
21 statistics;

22 (B) the costs, logistics, estimated imple-
23 mentation time, and reliability of producing the
24 statistics referred to in subparagraph (A); and

1 (C) the need for, and benefits of, estab-
2 lishing a standing commission after the termi-
3 nation of the Commission to address or rec-
4 ommend actions with respect to—

- 5 (i) household economic information;
6 (ii) non-market satellite accounts; and
7 (iii) other economic indicators and
8 measurements that are the subject of study
9 and evaluation by the Commission.

10 **SEC. 5. POWERS OF THE COMMISSION.**

11 (a) HEARINGS.—The Commission may hold such
12 hearings, sit and act at such times and places, take such
13 testimony, and receive such evidence as the Commission
14 considers advisable to carry out this Act.

15 (b) INFORMATION FROM FEDERAL AGENCIES.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission may secure
17 such information directly from any Federal depart-
18 ment or agency as the Commission determines to be
19 necessary to carry out this Act. Upon request of the
20 Chairman of the Commission, the head of such de-
21 partment or agency shall furnish such information to
22 the Commission.

23 (2) CONFIDENTIALITY.—The Commission shall
24 maintain the same level of confidentiality for such
25 information made available under this subsection as

1 is required of the head of the department or agency
2 from which the information was obtained.

3 (c) POSTAL SERVICES.—The Commission may use
4 the United States mails in the same manner and under
5 the same conditions as other departments and agencies of
6 the Federal Government.

7 (d) CONTRACT AUTHORITY.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to the Federal Prop-
9 erty and Administrative Services Act of 1949 (41
10 U.S.C. 251 et seq.), the Commission may enter into
11 contracts with Federal and State agencies, private
12 firms, institutions, and individuals for the conduct of
13 activities necessary to the discharge of its duties and
14 responsibilities.

15 (2) DURATION.—A contract, lease, or other
16 legal agreement entered into by the Commission may
17 not extend beyond the date of the termination of the
18 Commission.

19 **SEC. 6. COMMISSION PERSONNEL MATTERS.**

20 (a) COMPENSATION OF MEMBERS.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided under
22 paragraph (2), each member of the Commission who
23 is not an officer or employee of the Federal Govern-
24 ment may be compensated at a rate equal to the
25 daily equivalent of the maximum annual rate of

1 basic pay for level IV of the Executive Schedule
2 under section 5316 of title 5, United States Code,
3 for each day (including travel time) during which
4 such member is engaged in the performance of the
5 duties of the Commission.

6 (2) FEDERAL EMPLOYEES.—All members of the
7 Commission who are officers or employees of the
8 United States shall serve without compensation in
9 addition to that received for their services as officers
10 or employees of the United States.

11 (b) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—The members of the Com-
12 mission shall be allowed travel expenses, including per
13 diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for employ-
14 ees of agencies under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title
15 5, United States Code, while away from their homes or
16 regular places of business in the performance of services
17 for the Commission.

18 (c) STAFF.—

19 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Chairman of the Com-
20 mission may, without regard to the civil service laws
21 and regulations, appoint and terminate an executive
22 director and such other additional personnel as may
23 be necessary to enable the Commission to perform
24 its duties. The employment of an executive director
25 shall be subject to confirmation by the Commission.

1 (2) COMPENSATION.—The Chairman of the
2 Commission may fix the compensation of the execu-
3 tive director and other personnel without regard to
4 chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of title
5 5, United States Code, relating to classification of
6 positions and General Schedule pay rates, except
7 that the rate of pay for the executive director and
8 other personnel may not exceed the rate payable for
9 level IV of the Executive Schedule under section
10 5316 of such title.

11 (3) PERSONNEL AS FEDERAL EMPLOYEES.—

12 (A) IN GENERAL.—The executive director
13 and any personnel of the Commission who are
14 employees shall be employees under section
15 2105 of title 5, United States Code, for pur-
16 poses of chapters 63, 81, 83, 84, 85, 87, 89,
17 89A, 89B, and 90 of such title.

18 (B) MEMBERS OF BOARD.—Subparagraph
19 (A) may not be construed to apply to members
20 of the Commission.

21 (d) DETAIL OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.—Any
22 Federal Government employee may be detailed to the
23 Commission without reimbursement. Such detail shall be
24 without interruption or loss of civil service status or privi-
25 lege.

1 (e) PROCUREMENT OF TEMPORARY AND INTERMIT-
2 TENT SERVICES.—The Chairman of the Commission may
3 procure temporary and intermittent services under section
4 3109(b) of title 5, United States Code, at rates for individ-
5 uals which do not exceed the daily equivalent of the annual
6 rate of basic pay prescribed for level V of the Executive
7 Schedule under section 5316 of such title.

8 (f) VOLUNTEER SERVICES.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding section
10 1342 of title 31, United States Code, the Commis-
11 sion may—

12 (A) accept and utilize the services of volun-
13 teers serving without compensation; and

14 (B) reimburse such volunteers for local
15 travel and office supplies, and for other travel
16 expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsist-
17 ence, in accordance with section 5703 of title 5,
18 United States Code.

19 (2) STATUS.—A person providing volunteer
20 services to the Commission shall be considered an
21 employee of the Federal Government in the perform-
22 ance of those services for the purposes of—

23 (A) chapter 81 of title 5, United States
24 Code (relating to compensation for work related
25 injuries);

1 (B) chapter 11 of title 18, United States
2 Code (relating to conflicts of interest); and

3 (C) chapter 171 of title 28, United States
4 Code (relating to tort claims).

5 (g) ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT.—Upon the request
6 of the Commission, the Administrator of General Services
7 shall provide to the Commission, on a reimbursable basis,
8 the administrative support services necessary for the Com-
9 mission to carry out its responsibilities.

10 **SEC. 7. TERMINATION OF THE COMMISSION.**

11 The Commission shall terminate 90 days after the
12 date on which the Commission submits the report under
13 section 4(c).

14 **SEC. 8. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

15 (a) IN GENERAL.—Of the amounts made available
16 for the Bureau of Labor Statistics for fiscal year 2009,
17 not less than \$2,500,000 shall be made available for the
18 activities of the Commission under this Act.

19 (b) AVAILABILITY.—The amounts made available for
20 the activities of the Commission under subsection (a) shall
21 remain available until the date on which the Commission
22 is terminated pursuant to section 7.

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